



MAKING THE MOST OF THE ONLINE ENGAGEMENT BOOM

How to Effectively Use Digital Advertising to Ride the Wave of Increased Online Engagement

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The fact that we are living, working, and playing in the heart of the digital age isn't news, but the exponential growth of online engagement in the COVID-19 pandemic era should have all of us pausing to take stock. Let's take a closer look at some of the trends which have emerged to become norms that define the digital marketing landscape.

ONLINE CONTENT CONSUMPTION DOUBLED

With everyone more tied to breaking news updates while having fewer options for activities, it's no surprise that online content consumption increased during the pandemic — but it didn't just grow; [it doubled](#). Time spent online absorbing content went from just over three hours daily to a minute shy of seven hours per day. To say this is significant wildly understates the reality of this shift.

Perhaps most interestingly, statistics from the same [study](#) reveal that the majority of people don't expect to return to pre-pandemic levels of content consumption. From a digital marketing and advertising perspective, the increased opportunity for lead generation is clear.

ADVERTISING ENGAGEMENT IS RELATED TO TRUST

"Fake news" became more than a buzzword over the last year plus; people are now measurably gauging trust in the platform they're browsing on as they decide whether to engage with advertising they encounter there. More than two thirds of consumers (67%) [are more likely to engage with an ad on the website of a publisher they know and trust](#).

CONTEXTUAL TARGETING WINS THE DAY

With the marked increase of time spent online occurring simultaneously with the growing sophistication of consumer profiling, the expectation of a customized experience has increased. A whopping 74% of consumers [are "at least somewhat likely" to make a purchase based on experience alone](#) — and while that's clearly a B2C-relevant statement, what it really reveals is the current nature of online behavior. It's not much of a leap to extrapolate that people bring this behavior to bear on their B2B decision making, as well.

People expect to see advertising that is specifically relevant to the content they are actively consuming in the moment. In fact, 69% of people [say they are more likely to look at such ads](#).

WHY THESE THINGS MATTER

Increased online content consumption is a natural opportunity for companies to improve their lead generation through digital advertising, but this isn't occurring in a vacuum. More than ever, advertising needs to reach your target audience where they feel most comfortable (i.e., a trusted platform), and to be relevant to what they're already there to engage with.

LET'S TALK LINKEDIN

LinkedIn has emerged as a key advertising channel for B2B marketing — and to be clear, the statistics illustrated this before the pandemic. For example:

One frequently quoted 2012 HubSpot study [found LinkedIn to be 277% more effective than Facebook or Twitter at generating leads](#).

Surveyed B2B marketers in 2017 reported that [80% of their social media leads come from LinkedIn](#).



That said, the pandemic has accentuated LinkedIn's prowess in this area. With trust playing an ever-increasing role in consumers' minds, it is worth noting that LinkedIn [ranked highest](#) in this area amongst surveyed social media users at the end of 2020.

From the context perspective, LinkedIn users are already engaging with the platform specifically for business purposes, so B2B advertising is a natural contextual fit. In short:



Sounds good, right? Yes — but there's more to consider. Results may start with opportunity, but they don't end there. Identifying current trends and where your company is most likely to capitalize on them is great. Now, let's take a closer look at the role this plays in the larger picture of how to optimize your digital advertising efforts.

TOP 3 DOS AND DON'TS OF HEALTH SCIENCE DIGITAL ADVERTISING

Everybody knows digital advertising is valuable, but the real question is: where are you directing your leads, and what will they find when they get there?

Digital ads need to be supported by a solid branding platform. Without that, even the best digital ads aren't going to work as well as they should for you. With that in mind, here are some key digital advertising dos and don'ts to be aware of.

DO...

1. **Do have story-driven content:** Your online audience these days is too sophisticated to care about "just the facts, ma'am" content. They need a *why* from interaction one. That's what story-driven content is all about. From your social media posts to your infographics to your long-form content pieces, make sure your content branding aligns with telling your audience *why you* and *why now*.
2. **Do focus on value-add lead generation:** What are you offering your audience from impression one? Talking about how great your company is doesn't deliver value to your customer. Offering targeted solutions or information on pain points does. Illustrate your thought leadership and expertise while earning trust by providing value for free, then invite leads to go deeper by exchanging an internal white paper, case study, webinar, or other content for their contact information.
3. **Do meet your audience where they are:** Here's where the pandemic/post-pandemic online trends come into play. Capitalize on the increased online engagement by 1) focusing your efforts on connecting with your audience via platforms they already trust (which then boosts their trust of you) and 2) using contextually targeted advertising to speak to your audience about what they're already there to engage with.



DON'T...

1. **Don't neglect your website:** When was the last time you updated your website? What about your blog and other online content resources? In other words, what are your leads going to find if they click on your ad and walk through your digital door?

To reiterate, today's digital content consumers expect a customized online experience. If your website structure, navigation, or content (written, photo, graphic) is even remotely outdated or not optimally functional for visitors, you are losing leads. Websites should be completely updated every 2-3 years, and you should offer fresh content at least once a month, at a minimum.

2. **Don't be overtly promotional:** On the flip side of the #2 "Do" above, being overtly promotional gets boring for your audience very quickly. Ultimately, your advertising needs to be more about your audience than about you. Who are they? Why should they care about what you're offering? What's keeping them awake at night and how can you help them solve that? What's in it for them? Solve their problems. Ignite their interest by expanding their perspective. Invite them into a conversation. Go much, much deeper than: "We're great, and here are our services."
3. **Don't skimp on diversity:** Are you illustrating people of many different ethnicities, genders, and abilities in your advertising? If not, you're losing leads. Nearly two thirds of Americans [consider diversity in advertising important](#). Homogenous, under-representative advertising is dead, and so is the health of your lead generation if you rely on it.

In summary, you have a clear opportunity to speak to an audience that is more engaged online than ever before — an audience of people who are eager to build partnerships and connections to create their most stable, successful future. They're looking for you. Are all aspects of your online presence ready to answer the call? SCORR can help make sure your answer is a resounding **YES**.

About the Author

Haley Steinhardt is a marketing expert and content specialist with 18+ years of experience building brands and promoting thought leaders. As Director of Content and Thought Leadership for SCORR, Haley supports clients in optimizing their voice and presence to reach their target audience meaningfully and effectively through content creation and management, PR and advertising direction, social media and website strategizing, and more.

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